

In the World of Music and Musicians

Letters From a Founder Of the Philharmonic Society

Music in New York Eighty Years Ago; Samuel Johnson's Recollections; Notes Sent to Aid a Historian Thirty Years Ago

By H. E. Krehbiel

The Philharmonic Society has added to its season's list to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the society. By a coincidence it is just eighty years ago today that at a meeting of the founders of the society, held, I believe, in the Shakespeare, an eating house in the Bow, within stone throw of the Bow Church, the society was organized. I am writing these words (it was by a man named Windust, who had been associated with William Niblo in the Bank Coffee House, in Pine Street, and afterward managed Niblo's Garden, a committee reported a constitution which, a week later, was adopted as the fundamental law of the Philharmonic.

In the spring of 1892, for the approaching fiftieth anniversary of the society, I was asked by the directors to write a memorial history of the organization. It was a difficult task, for the records of the society were fragmentary, all the autograph letters of honorary members like Mendelssohn, Spohr, Wagner, Raff and others had been stolen; there were no historical notes of any completeness which were trustworthy, and of the original members only five were still alive. One of these, Allan Bodworth, lived in California; another, H. C. Timm, whom I knew, was too old and feeble to be consulted (he died in the fall of the year); James L. Ensign was living in retirement in New Haven, and William Scharfberg was confined by weakness to his apartment in New York. The only one who was still actively interested in the society's affairs was Samuel Johnson, who had played viola in the orchestra at its first concert in 1842, and had been the society's secretary in its ninth, fortieth and forty-first seasons, its treasurer from 1863 to 1865 and a director in the season 1875-76. He was a hale and hearty little man, eighty-two years of age, who lived at Milton-on-the-Hudson. I visited Ensign and Scharfberg and interviewed them in their homes but Mr. Johnson I saw in New York on several occasions, and when the proof sheets of the history came from the printer I sent them to him for comment and correction. He immediately became a voluminous correspondent, and not only lived to participate in the festival of 1892, but four years longer. A few days ago his letters and notes sent back to me with the proofs fell under my eyes, and the bulk of what he wrote I now reproduce. The book is long out of print, but the excerpts of copies will easily understand some of his comments. It would consume too much time and space to explain them all, but I have interpolated a few expository remarks. Much labor was spent on making up a list of the original members, that in F. L. Ritter's "Music in America" being obviously incorrect. This work accounts for some of Mr. Johnson's observations. Everything in his disjointed letters, however, is interesting as throwing light on the state of music in New York in 1842.

Some of the Original Philharmonicians

MILTON, February 26, 1892.

Mr. Krehbiel, Dr. Sir: I am not well enough to come to the City. I send you a list of the originals who joined for the formation of N. Y. P. S. You will perceive that many backed out. Ritter's actual orchestra I think correct. Windmiller was an artist member, but a very poor violinist. Wiese was the oboe at the first concert—a splendid oboe, too, for the present I can not recall his name. The report of the 2nd concert is wrong. Perout was viola, so Chevalier. Mr. Wood (the double drum) was seen after Ritter, who defaulted; then Mr. Paganini. Later Wiese's son was 2nd flute. Mr. Reiff was vice-president, Otto and Boucher were directors.

Paul Julien was a precocious violinist, but for all he did—a handsome French boy, petted and spoiled. Died in South America a dissipated wretch. He played for the Philharmonic Society.

No one can be more desirous that a true history of the information of the Greatest Musical Institution in America (he published) than I am.

The Pioneer in Classic Orchestra

If I am better I may come down—try you come up. Please see the 4 pages I wrote to Pres. Hyde; you may take a hint toward your work. I live here (in a contemptible little village). I am writing this to send by the 10 o'clock Postal Car more than a mile hence. If I did not do this you could not receive this until Monday at noon—Thanks to the cutting Wanda. Postoffice closed here before I read your last.

You cannot tire me by asking questions. I will reply instantly to every letter you write. I enclose some names who were really the original men to start the New Great P. Soc.

Respectfully,

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

Mr. Ritter has given me credit, but not for half the information he obtained from me. Also Mr. Carter when I was interviewed by R. Grant White, who had intended "A Musical History of the U. S." Again, don't hesitate to ask questions. I have nothing to do but answer you. Boy will have to meet the Postal Car on its arrival at 7 a. m. I am writing this at a late hour.

Notes on a Predecessor of the Philharmonic

MILTON, March 15, 1892.

Mr. Krehbiel,

Dr. Sir: I wrote a letter to you yesterday, but as I live more than a mile from the P. O. I had not a chance to send it.

My friend Ritter's last book is very faulty. The "First History of Music" in America by him was very poor; in fact, he was not Americanized sufficiently to write such a history. Ritter thanks me and others for information, but in justice to himself "the philosophical and other reflections belong to him." He wanted me to criticize his work so as to avail himself of my opinion in a second edition.

I found so many mistakes, Historical, Critical, Grammatical, and more said about *Fanny Ritter* than about our Phil. Socy. I did not send the Criticism. "Sn. Paganini was an excellent oboe. Many good instrumental players came with Montrossor. The opera was given at Richmond Hill, Burr's residence Carmine St. and Hudson then 'out of town.'" Many of these Italian instrumentalists were at the Enterpean in 1839. You 50 years ago a choir of 75-100 singers at the Broadway Tabernacle, weekly rehearsals, and regular attendance. Parts equally balanced—the singers sang *con amore*. I played the violoncello to accompany and give the pitch, i. e., key-note. There has never been a good church singing since. "Amsterdam," "Coronation" and "Old Hundred" were grandly sung! I enjoyed it and the SALARY! This *en passant*. You are not writing the History of Music in America, but of the N. Y. Phil. Socy.

Mr. Boucher (son of the celebrated violinist Boucher), see "Dabourg." B. was a good friend of mine, a good musician and a good cellist; but he played on a *New Cello*. The tone was of poor quality. *Rough*, and it did not carry like a *Cremona*. B. played in that barn called the Broadway Tabernacle, capable of seating 3,000 people. Old Bull took in \$3,000 cash at a concert there, \$1 admission, not counting double leads. B. married a French dressmaker. She hired a house in Warren Street with privilege of buying it in twenty years. She sold this privilege for enough to buy a house in Eleventh Street, near Broadway. This is now worth a fortune. Boucher was conductor in the Opera (Montrossor's) just before it "burst." When Fred Bergner was elected principal cello at the Phil. Socy. B took the viola.

Alpers, a young enthusiastic German and superb organist. Died young. "Early piety," perhaps. He looked like a parson. At his funeral the funeral march from the "Eroica" was performed by the Phil. Socy. in the Tabernacle, Broadway—a very interesting ceremony, largely attended. A floral wreath was placed on his coffin. The undertaker saw that wreath many weeks after. "It was as fresh as though just from the garden."

Mr. Etienne was quite an old man, a pianist, a composer for the piano. His horn playing would not do for a watering-place band now; a true gentleman of the école Française. Wiegner, a wonderful orchestral violin, educated in counterpoint, a good double bass, a *drunken confair*. I am sorry to say this, for he thought much of me. Through the influence of his German friends he was elected to direct one concert. "He will be drunk and not be able to," so said his opponents. His friends guarded him well dressed, and he was at the conducting stand at rehearsal and concert. He was too nervous for the business. He became a fiddler for the lowest dens and married a woman, as she said. When he awoke the morning following his wedding he kicked the woman out of bed, saying: "What the devil do you want here?"

George Loder, a very good friend of mine, was a rather small man, though of very handsome features; poetical in appearance, a thoroughly good pianist, contra-bass and arranger, a director of music, a distant relation to the celebrated Loder, of London, who published a school (English school) for the violin. Mrs. Loder, another relation, also related to Watson, father of the Magazine Watson and of Mrs. Bailey, who sang at Paganini's concerts. I think George Loder was merely an arranger—no opera of his either here or in England. He and his wife went to Australia, where he died. He was very witty, but of the Dean Swift order. He was not more than five feet eight inches, a fine, flowing black beard, compact figure; he looked stout when standing beside your humble servant.

Old Wiese played at a concert and rehearsal before he was elected a member. For this he was paid \$8, maybe. The constitution says every member must play at one concert and rehearsal before he is elected. See constitution.

A poet or essayist, a writer of a book should not be hurried. Paganini will not run for being spurred to exertion. When one begins to write a book about anything I find it grows in dimensions as the work proceeds. You cannot, dare not make it short; and if of great length some will still complain. I often think of a clergyman who was invited to preach when visiting. They said our minister is sick. He did as he was asked. He went to his room and wrote out a sermon. One of the elders thanked him, but said: "Your sermon was too long." "Well, my friend, I had not time to make it shorter!"

As a rule, the immigrants were not refined, and those born on foreign soil were worse than natives. They came here for Liberty, i. e., to sit or stand



as you may find to your advantage. If there is anything else you wish, "ask and ye shall receive."

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

Urelli Corelli Hill.

The First President

Pretentious concerts, indeed; fifteen to twenty instruments, one rehearsal—short at that! No, not a proportion of double basses, but three times as many as hitherto in America.

Urelli Corelli Hill—I reverence the name of Arcangelo Corelli, as his Italians called him. No doubt he was the first real artist on the violin. I don't believe in his crying out when leader "Gardez-vous l'ut!" Lies! Lies! The good I can boast of in my music I owe to having been schooled in Corelli.

Mr. A. P. Heinrich—A crazy old musical enthusiast. The Sinking Fund was called the "Stinking Fund" and was voted out of existence long ago. Him we voted to study with Spohr, so that Messrs. Firth, Hill and Pond could sell "Spohr's Violin School" for \$7 a copy. They paid Hill's expenses. A pupil of Spohr's said to me at that time S. refused at first to accept Hill as a pupil, but he did, considering he had come so far. Spohr ridiculed H. as a violinist, so my informant said. Then H. had a "fiddle" made by a carpenter in Grove Street, New York.

I don't believe the "Tannhäuser" overture was played in America until Bergmann introduced it at the Bowery Opera House. He means "Freischütz." I was invited to play at the Schlesinger concert. I was young and too modest, i. e., diffident, to accept the engagement. I am bravely over all that. If Paganini asked me to play for him I would accede! Men are but men!

I would say "germ" instead of "egg" as being more in accord with modern science. F. W. Rosier resigned because he was a defaulter! Vieux Temps (sic) was elected honorary member, though he did not deserve it. Some time I will tell you why.

Messrs. Wiese sr. and Wiese jr., flute, father and son.

According to my knowledge, the first meetings were largely English and American! This is positive. Please save the narrow strip I sent you of names not German.

(x) Had to be professors of music. I was a sort of amphibious animal. Some time I will amuse you by an account of that animal. I write as the fit comes; if anything worthy of your consideration, so be it, if not, consign it to the waste basket.

(xx) The fines are now enormous. The Society, being a sort of Republic, makes its own laws, is therefore compelled to enforce them.

(xx) Necessary to building the Hall!!! It requires more than an act of incorporation to build a hall in N. Y. For the Philharmonic and all who advance its interests.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

To Mr. Krehbiel.

Oboe Players

A Century Ago

Jenny Lind's first concert in Castle Garden brought the sum of \$30,000. One-third of that sum was Miss Lind's share. She gave the whole of this to charities in the city of New York! Where are Patti's thousands? Echo: "Where?" It inspired "intelligent appreciation" for the future.

As a rule, the immigrants were not refined, and those born on foreign soil were worse than natives. They came here for Liberty, i. e., to sit or stand

Calendar for the Current Week

SUNDAY—Aeolian Hall, 3:15 p. m., concert by the Young Men's Symphony Orchestra; Carnegie Hall, 3 p. m., song recital by Maria Ivogán, soprano; Hippodrome, 8:15 p. m., song recital by Ernestine Schumann-Heink; Metropolitan Opera House, 8:30 p. m., opera concert.

MONDAY—Carnegie Hall, 8:15 p. m., concert by the Harvard Glee Club; Metropolitan Opera House, 2 p. m., French opera, "Carmen"; 8 p. m., Italian opera, "Cosi Fan Tutte".

TUESDAY—Aeolian Hall, 8:15 p. m., piano recital by N. Val Peavey; Town Hall, 8:15 p. m., song recital by Luella Melius, soprano; Metropolitan Opera House, 8:15 p. m., concert by the Mendelssohn and University Glee clubs, assisted by Rosa Ponselle, soprano.

WEDNESDAY—City College, 4 p. m., organ recital by Samuel A. Baldwin; Carnegie Hall, 8:15 p. m., concert by the New York Banks Glee Club; Metropolitan Opera House, 8 p. m., German opera, "Die Walküre".

THURSDAY—Town Hall, 8:15 p. m., piano and violin recital by Germaine Schnitzer and Andre Polak; Metropolitan Opera House, 2 p. m., Russian opera, "Snegurotchka"; 8:15 p. m., Italian opera, "Andrea Chénier".

FRIDAY—Metropolitan Opera House, 7:45 p. m., German opera, "Tristan and Isolde".

SATURDAY—Aeolian Hall, 3 p. m., violin recital by Bronislaw Huberman; Town Hall, 8:15 p. m., concert by Olga Carrara, soprano, and Edwin Hughes, pianist; Metropolitan Opera House, 2 and 8 p. m., Italian opera, "Zaza" and "La Forza del Destino".

where they wanted to. I am a Foreigner, and I know what I am writing about in 1841.

How my friend Ritter could write "No oboe in America until 1830" and then but one in Baltimore—in another place the oboe appears when a *Concerto* was performed on an oboe in the last century. The fact is an oboe in a small orchestra would have been a nuisance—the quacking of a goose without the tuning down by the strings. The oboe (like the man) comes when he is wanted.

As you wished me to look over these proofs I have done so, and all you have said meets my approval. The few remarks I have made are not from any fault finding. I write as I feel, truthfully. If you need further proof sheets, they will be gladly received by me and will be honestly commented upon. I am nervous from rheumatism and don't write as well as my ability to do when well. This is the reason I had to decline looking over the proofs last night at the Grand Union Hotel. I thought I would read proofs and return them; I went to bed instead.

I am so interested in the Philharmonic that anything I can do or say to forward a History for the information of those who may come after us I feel it a pleasure and I believe it a duty. Very respectfully,

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

Box 95, Milton on the Hudson, N. Y.

First Performance of

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony

MILTON, March 14, 1892.

Mr. Krehbiel: I have nothing to do but write. If you can find a grain occasionally in the chaff I shall not have written in vain. The best description of the first concert in 1842 is the letter of Mr. Strong. This I found written in the Minutes when I was Secretary, and I copied it for Mason and Ritter. That letter is a very tame affair; it does not give even an idea of the tremendous effect on the audience when for the first time in America was heard a full orchestra according

to the score (Partitur). The opening notes of the 5th Sym. astonished the audience as though they were struck by electricity! They did not know it was good—they were certain it was great! From that moment small orchestras were doomed. A revolution in music had taken place. Amateurs were being taught symphonies complete, not as hitherto, fragmentarily. Students began to bring their scores to the rehearsals and the community began to be classical!

An Appreciation of Carl Bergmann

The first concert was like a diamond in the rough, but oh, what "chiel!" Every performer's nerves were strung to the highest pitch of endeavor and enjoyment—450 vibrations nothing in comparison.

That diamond in the rough received its polish from Carl Bergmann, who brought the diamonds to sparkle as an Amsterdam lapidary would the adamant. Mr. Ritter requested me to write for him a description of the conductors then in New York, according to my view. I will try to repeat some of the characteristics of the lamented Carl Bergmann, "the genial loafer," as Ritter called him. Carl Bergmann was an educated gentleman, a profound musician, theoretical and practical. He had a fine ear and exquisite taste. He could get more out of an orchestra at one rehearsal than many others could at three rehearsals. He was not a talker, but when he spoke it meant something. Conductors are generally guided by metronomes and the dynamic signs; Bergmann never! He would say to the wind instruments "Not so loud, please"; to the quartette, "Meine Herren, listen to the little figure by the clarinette, accompany, but do not overwhelm the melody." To the quartette he would say: "Sing, gentlemen! Make your instruments sing—*scher ruhig*" (excuse my German; I could do better in French). The first conductors prepared the soil and then the seed; the cultivation was done by Bergmann. Others have reaped the

harvest. Carl Bergmann only had his dividend—once up to \$25 for the season! Mr. Thomas received \$500 for every concert *sure on the morning following* the concert, and a further sum at the end of the season. It is gratefully acknowledged by the society that Mr. Thomas did not *exact* all that was due to him, but generously turned the amount to the dividend fund. I write now that you may mention Bergmann favorably. I will send another letter to-morrow.

Truly yours,

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

Artistic Manners

Eighty Years Ago

MILTON, March 15, 1892.

Sir: After I saw you last Saturday evening Mrs. Shaw came to me and asked me if I had read an article in "The Evening Post" concerning the N. Y. P. S. . . . What was my astonishment when I read in the proof sheets, "A lady who applied for membership," etc., was Mrs. Shaw's writing. . . . Why I write now is to ask, is not the whole article concerning the admission to rehearsal a little "too previous"? The Society, according to the proof sheets, was not yet organized!

As I am writing I wish to mention that the Rules of the Society were rigidly enforced in the early years. No tuning or prelude in public. Instruments were tuned in the annex. One could have heard a pin drop when the conductor waved his baton for commencement. Then the opening of the Fifth Symphony sounded almost unearthly. Nowadays I often hear tuning and strumming before beginning and during the space between the numbers.

There was a pretty vignette, a Cupid playing on a lyre, an eagle above on all early programs, tickets, etc. There were also various stamps for tickets, etc., all lost! When I was secretary I tried to hunt them up. Would it not be well to have a new stamp (wood cut) made of the above design, to be printed on the title page and used afterward as a "trademark"? Write to me if you want to question me. Respectfully,

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

The Apollo Hall was acoustically correct—a parallelogram. No ornament, scarcely a molding around the ceiling. No chambers, wings, flies or overhead lobbies to deaden the sound. Let Mr. Nikisch bring his orchestra to the Metropolitan and it will not sound as in the bit of a hall called Chickering's.

Something About

Double-Bass Players

MILTON, March 15, 1892.

Mr. Krehbiel.

Dear Sir: I have been thinking over the Wiese affair. W. played at the concert before he was elected a member; consequently he was paid for his services. I am pretty sure for one concert and rehearsal (then private), \$5 being then the price for concert and rehearsal, and on all occasions \$1 for an extra rehearsal, a short one, perhaps. I cannot call to mind the name of the oboist before Wiese. He was a Spaniard of small stature, and though I cannot remember his name I can see him "in my mind's eye." He went to Boston, where he has lived ever since.

As to Mr. Jacobi being the best contra-bass, when Carolini had been here before him, bosh! Three of the best contra-bassists that ever lived were Carolini, Dragonetti and Bottesini—the last the Paganini of that ponderous instrument. Dragonetti never came to America. He and Lindley played together at the opera and concerts all over the country (England) for more than fifty years from the same music

stands. Dragonetti was a collector of Cremona instruments and children's dolls of antique and curious make. I heard Dragonetti in England. In 1842 he must have been more than eighty years of age.

I write of things as they occur to my mind, not necessarily relating to the Philharmonic Society. You may at some time be induced to write a History of Music in America, and perhaps some of my wind may help you sail along. When I say Music in America I mean classical music, not psalmody or waltzes, jigs or marches. I don't speak disrespectfully of psalmody, particularly the Gregorian, or such as "Mein Gott ist ein feste Burg" (as near German as I can make it). The best singing *per se* I ever heard was in the Broadway Tabernacle by over a thousand singers from the Methodist churches of New York and vicinity.

"Amsterdam" and "Coronation" in particular. The music known by heart and sung with *Methodist enthusiasm*! How different is the dead and alive singing by the antique chorus of the present opera in New York! It makes me sick to hear the pilgrims' chorus from "Tannhäuser" drawn out at a snail's pace. It should be sung as played in the overture, to my thinking, and played in the overture as slowly as when sung. No two works ever differed more than opera chorus and the orchestra in the above mentioned. I am old; cannot live very much longer; I feel it my duty to leave my recollections and experiences dating from a time when the things I write about were considered below notice. To be able to play the violin then was a disgrace. I shall give proofs of this. As for a young girl playing the violin, she would prefer to appear as Lady Godiva at Coventry Fair.

The Spirit of the

Old Bandsmen

I shall continue to write till "the Book" is published. . . . In 1892 musical performances are highly "finished," as some one remarked of a great speechmaker, "as polished as marble." "Yea," replied the other, "and as cold." It is not playing an instrument now, it is *working* it. As a good musician (one of the Thomas orchestra) said to me when I made some such remark: "Eleven concerts in one week and rehearsing with country choirs, traveling every night and parts of days, takes away the love of music!" (This need not be in the book.) I mention it to show that musicians who took part in the earlier Philharmonic concerts played their parts *con amore*. They stood up—not seated, playing in a perfunctory manner and hurrying out when not needed in full orchestra, tutti, etc. Once at a rehearsal I heard a very beautiful piece of music. I turned around to the flute and said, "That is very fine." "Yes, Mr. Johnson, but if you had played at a ball until 4 o'clock this morning, having nearly two miles to walk home, go to bed and leave word to be called so as to attend rehearsal here at 9 a. m. it would not sound so pleasantly." I never did play at balls, in the streets or private parties, particularly while they were eating or drinking, but at concerts, the opera and in church on Sundays. I worked for my living, played music for diversion, though I took pay, because I could not afford to do otherwise. I usually saved as much as three "musikers" every day.

S. J.

End of the

European Society

(Page 17) "Not a parallel" in Ger-

WOLFSOHN MUSICAL BUREAU announces

CARNEGIE HALL TODAY at 3—MARIA

IVOCUN

34 and Last Song Recital (Steinway Piano)

TOWN HALL, MON. NIGHT, APR. 24, at 8:15

BACHAUS

3th and Last Piano Recital (Heldwin Piano)

TOWN HALL, Thurs. Eve., April 20, at 8:15

POLAH

and SCHNITZER

Program of MODERN Music. (Chickering Piano)

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Farewell Recital LEOPOLD

GODOWSKY

With MAIER and PATTISON

Carnegie Hall, Wed. Eve., May 3rd, at 8:15

Programme includes: Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Debussy, Ravel, Godowsky and Godowsky's Paraphrase on Weber's "Invitation to the Dance" for three pianos (First time).

Tickets at Box Office 50c to \$2.75. (Knabe and Chickering Pianos)

Aeolian Hall, To-morrow (Mon.) Eve. at 8:15.

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Fourth and last recital by BRONISLAW

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AEOLIAN HALL

SATURDAY APRIL, APRIL 22, at 8.

50c to \$2.75 at Box Office. (Knabe Piano)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI, Conductor.

CARNEGIE HALL, TUESDAY, APRIL 18, at 8:15

HALF EVENING

HAROLD RAUER, Pianist.

Aeolian Hall, Sat. Aft., April 22, at 8.

PROF. DEZSO

d'Antaffy

Samson

Assisted by LOUIS ROZSA, Battoque

Mgt. Daniel Mayer, Chickering Piano.

PHILHARMONIC

ENGELBERG

1845—Eightieth Anniversary—1923

Carnegie Hall, Wed. Eve., Apr. 26.

Metropolitan Opera House, Sun. Eve., 30

BETHOVEN 9th SYMPHONY

Quartet and Oratorio Society

Felix F. Laifels, Mgr. Steinway Piano.

Aeolian Hall, Tues. Eve., April 18, at 8:15

PIANO RECITAL

N. VAL PEAVEY

Mgt. Annie Friedberg, Steinway Piano.

Touching Beethoven's

Choral Symphony

MILTON, March 22, 1892, Monday.

My Dear Mr. Krehbiel: Proof received. I was at home sick in 1867, so all that about the Ninth Symphony is a blank to me. The account of anson, other attempt to raise funds for a Hall took place in the Academy of Music. Rainy night was the excuse for non-attendance. Each member was assessed \$12 to make up the deficiency. I played in the orchestra at the first performance in Castle Garden before the Philharmonic Society came into existence. We think Mr. Johnson was mistaken here. The first performance of Beethoven's Choral Symphony in America took place in Castle Garden on May 20, 1846, under the direction of George Loder. Thirty years ago the wife of T. Britzel, vice-president of the society at the fiftieth anniversary, sang in the chorus at the time and gave an account of the performance. So did

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